

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 ACDA-07 IO-13 /076 W
-----251840Z 111537 /50

R 251526Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3791
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 BEIRUT 1885

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, MARR, LE, SY
SUBJECT: THE MODERATE PHALANGE POSITION

REF: 76 BEIRUT 8739

1. SUMMARY: PHALANGE IDEA MAN PAKRADOUNI SAYS THAT CHRISTIAN LEBANESE FRONT EXTREMISTS ARE DELIBERATELY MISREPRESENTING US POLICY TO STRENGTHEN THEIR OWN CONFEDERATIONIST OR PARTITIONIST IDEAS. THE PHALANGE IS RESISTING ESTABLISHING A HARD LEBANESE FRONT NEGOTIATING POSITION ON THE FUTURE OF LEBANON AT THIS TIME, SINCE THE IDEA OF SOME KIND OF CONFEDERATION IS TOO STRONG. IT IS LIKEWISE TOO EARLY TO PROMOTE CHRISTIAN-MOSLEM DIALOGUE, EXCEPT IN A LOW PROFILE AND INFORMAL WAY. PAKRADOUNI SAYS ASAD WILL MOVE DECISIVELY TO IMPLEMENT THE CAIRO ACCORD AFTER HE TALKS TO PRESIDENT CARTER IN MAY, PROVIDED THE US MAKES CONCESSIONS ON THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION. END SUMMARY.

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2. EMBOFF CALLED APR 22 ON KARIM PAKRADOUNI, PHALANGE PARTY POLITICAL BUREAU MEMBER, A LEADING PROPONENT OF MODERATE CHRISTIAN POLITICS, AND STRONG SUPPORTER OF PRESIDENT SARKIS AND OF SYRIAN POLICY IN LEBANON.

3. CHRISTIAN EXTREMISTS AND US POLICY. PAKRADOUNI SAID THAT THE CHRISTIAN HARD-LINERS OR THOSE WHO SEEK A "CHRISTIAN LEBANON," SEEK DELIBERATELY TO SPREAD THE IDEA THAT THE US FOLLOWS A "DOUBLE ECHELON" POLICY IN LEBANON, SECRETLY SUPPORTING CONFEDERATION OR EVEN PARTITION, WHILE PUBLICLY ESPOUSING LEBANESE NATIONAL UNITY. HE SINGLED OUT CHARLES MALIK, WHO HAS HAD MEETINGS WITH BOTH SECRETARY KISSINGER AND SECRETARY VANCE. UNFORTUNATELY, THE MYTH OF CHARLES MALIK'S INFLUENCE IN WASHINGTON WAS BORN IN 1958, WHEN, IT IS SAID, HE SOUGHT US INTERVENTION IN LEBANON DESPITE THE OPPOSITION OF THE US AMBASSADOR IN BEIRUT. PAKRADOUNI CALLED MALIK FLATLY "A LIAR." HE SAID OTHER HARD-LINE CHRISTIANS, WITH PERHAPS MORE SINCERITY, ALSO HAD NOTIONS OF US SUPPORT. ONE WAS BECHIR BEMAYEL, WHO WAS IN ATHENS A WHILE AGO AND CLAIMS TO HAVE GOTTEN ASSURANCES OF US SUPPORT FROM UNSPECIFIED SMERICAN OFFICIALS. PAKRADOUNI SAID THAT UNDERLYING THIS MYTH -- WHICH HE DOES NOT BELIEVE AT ALL HIMSELF -- WAS THE REPUTATION OF THE CIA IN THE MIDDLE EAST FOR PURSUING THE "OTHER ECHELON" OF US POLICY, AND THE REPUTATION OF SECRETARY KISSINGER FOR BYZANTINE DIPLOMACY.

4. PAKRADOUNI THOUGHT THE EMBASSY AND USG GENERALLY OUGHT TO CONTINUE TO STATE CLEARLY ITS SUPPORT OF LEBANESE NATIONAL UNITY AND ITS SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT SARKIS, NOT ONLY FOR THE SAKE OF LEBANON, BUT ALSO FOR THE SAKE OF GOOD US RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB

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WORLD, WHICH STRONGLY OPPOSES CHRISTIAN SEPARATIST TENDENCIES. HE THOUGHT THAT THE HARD-LINERS WERE BEGINNING TO GET THE MESSAGE, INCLUDING PARTICULARLY CAMILLE CHAMOUN, AS REFLECTED IN HIS INTERVIEW OF A FEW DAYS AGO IN "HAWADESS," IN WHICH HE DENIED ANY COOPERATION WITH ISRAEL.

5. THE TASKS FACING LEBANON. PAKRADOUNI SAID, AS HE SEES THINGS, LEBANON (AND THE PHALANGE) ARE CURRENTLY FACED WITH THREE MAJOR POLITICAL TASKS:

- 1) TO SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT;
- 2) TO BUILD RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB WORLD; AND,
- 3) TO BEGIN A LOW-KEY BUT REAL CHRISTIAN-MOSLEM DIALOGUE.

6. PHALANGE AND LEBANESE FRONT STUDY PROJECTS. PAKRADOUNI SAID THAT, IN LINE WITH HIS WISH TO PREVENT

THE PHALANGE FROM LOCKING ITSELF INTO NON-NEGOTIABLE POSITIONS ON THE FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL QUESTIONS FACING LEBANON, HE WAS OPPOSING THE PHALANGE PLAYING AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE VARIOUS STUDY GROUPS ESTABLISHED BY THE LEBANESE FRONT CONCLAVE IN JANUARY. NEVERTHELESS, THE PHALANGE COULD NOT BOYCOTT THE PROCEEDINGS EITHER. ACCORDINGLY, HE WAS PLAYING THE ROLE OF DEVIL'S ADVOCATE IN VARIOUS COMMITTEE MEETINGS. ARGUING ABOUT EVERY POSSIBLE POINT MADE IN WRITING OR ORALLY AT SUCH MEETINGS. THE NLP HAS ALREADY PRODUCED A DRAFT CONSTITUTION CALLING FOR CANTONALIZATION, AND THE KASLIK GROUP HAS PRODUCED A POLITICAL DECENTRALIZATION PLAN (SEPAIR). THE PHALANGE HAS SO FAR DELIBERATELY PRODUCED NOTHING, BUT WOULD WITHIN THE NEXT WEEK OFFER A VAGUELY WORDED MEMORANDUM.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 BEIRUT 1885

7. PAKRADOUNI SAID THAT IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THAT EDOUARD HONEIN WAS TEMPORARY "SECRETARY GENERAL" OF THE LEBANESE FRONT, BECAUSE HONEIN, WHO FULLY SUPPORTED CAMILLE CHAMOUN'S IDEAS ON CANTONALIZATION, WAS A CLOSE FRIEND OF SULEIMAN FRANGIE'S AND FRANGIE TENDED TO ACCEPT HONEIN'S COUNSEL. HOWEVER, ON THE BASIS OF A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH HIM, PAKRADOUNI SAID HE BELIEVED FRANGIE IS RATHER SINGULARLY INTERESTED NOWADAYS IN JUST ONE THING, THE APPLICATION

OF THE CAIRO ACCORD, AND IS DISINTERESTED ABOUT FORMULAS FOR THE FUTURE.

8. CURRENT PHALANGE POLITICS. WITHIN THE PHALANGE, PAKRADOUNI SAID, HE TRIES TO PLAY THE "VOICE OF REASON," ADVOCATING A POLITICS OF THE POSSIBLE AGAINST MORE INTEMPERATE ELEMENTS. HE PERSONALLY IS RESISTING THE IDEA THAT THE PHALANGE -- OR THE LEBANESE FRONT -- PRODUCE A FIRM POSITION AT THE PRESENT TIME ON THE CONFIDENTIAL

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FUTURE CONFIGURATION OF LEBANON, SINCE SUCH A POSITION COULD ONLY BE FOR CONFEDERATION. AT A LATER TIME, PERHAPS IN SIX MONTHS, IT WILL BE POSSIBLE FOR THE PHALANGE TO OPENLY AND DIRECTLY SUPPORT NATIONAL UNITY AND STRICTLY "ADMINISTRATIVE" DECENTRALIZATION. PIERRE GEMAYEL, HE SAID, SHARED THIS VIEW.

9. PAKRADOUNI SAID BECHIR BEMAYEL WAS PLAYING A DANGEROUS GAME. BECHIR IS CLOSE TO THE CHAMOUNISTS AND SOMEWHAT AT ODDS WITH THE PHALANGE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, NOT IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN PHALANGE-CHAMOUNIST COOPERATION AND NOT NECESSARILY BECAUSE OF THE SENTIMENTS OF THE PHALANGE MILITIA RANK-AND-FILE, BUT BECAUSE BECHIR HIMSELF PERSONALLY (AND SINCERELY) INTENSELY DISLIKES 1) THE SYRIAN, AND 2) PRESIDENT SARKIS, WHOM HE REGARDS AS A STOOGES OF THE SYRIANS.

10. MOSLEM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE. PAKRADOUNI STILL BELIEVES THE TIME IS NOT RIPE FOR DIRECT CHRISTIAN-MOSLEM NEGOTIATIONS, BUT INFORMAL CONTACTS NEED MUCH MORE DEVELOPMENT. HE HAS HIMSELF RECENTLY TALKED WITH WALID JUNBLATT AND HOPES TO DO SO AGAIN, AND PLANS TO TALK TO OTHERS IN WEST BEIRUT AS WELL. HE SAID THERE WAS SO FAR VERY LITTLE CONTACT BETWEEN CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM POLITICAL LEADERS, AND THAT IT SHOULD BE DELIBERATELY STIMULATED.

11. THE CAIRO ACCORD. PAKRADOUNI SEES THE QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN STATUS IN LEBANON AS POSING THREE QUITE DISTINCT GEOGRAPHIC SITUATIONS:

A. IN THE CHRISTIAN HEARTLAND, THERE WAS -- SINCE THE TALL OF QARANTINA, TEL ZAATAR, ETC. -- NO LONGER ANY PROBLEM AT ALL.

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B. IN THE SOUTH, NOTHING COULD BE DONE ANYWAY, GIVEN THE ISRAELI VETO OF SYRIAN MILITARY PRESENCE THERE.

C. THE REAL PRESENT PROBLEM IS IN THE "MOSLEM CITIES," ESPECIALLY TRIPOLI, SIDON, AND WEST BEIRUT. THERE THE SYRIANS HAVE THE MEANS TO ACT, BUT HAVE NOT YET DONE SO.

12. PAKRADOUNI SAID THAT SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASAD (WHOM HE HAS SEEN TWICE IN DAMASCUS RECENTLY) IS DETERMINED TO BRING THE PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON UNDER CONTROL AS THEY ARE IN SYRIA. ASAD WENT TO MOSCOW PARTLY TO ASCERTAIN WHAT THE RUSSIANS WOULD TOLERATE IN TERMS OF SYRIAN ACTION AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS. (PAKRADOUNI DID NOT SAY, BUT IMPLIED THAT ASAD WAS CONFIDENT HE COULD MOVE AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON WITHOUT JEOPARDIZING HIS SOVIET SUPPORT.) IN MAY, ASAD WILL SEE PRESIDENT CARTER. IF HE CAN GET FROM HIM SOME AMERICAN CONCESSIONS VIS-A-VIS THE PALESTINIANS, ASAD WILL THEN BE IN A POSITION SIMULTANEOUSLY TO PROFILE HIMSELF AS A TRUE SUPPORTER OF THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE AND TO MORE DECISIVELY AND IMMEDIATELY IN "THE CITIES" (AND NEARBY REFUGEE CAMPS) TO ASSERT CONTROL OF THE PALESTINIANS. IF ASAD GETS NOTHING FROM US, HE WILL MOVE AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS ANYWAY, BUT MUCH MORE SLOWLY AND CAUTIOUSLY, AS HE HAS BEEN DOING OVER RECENT MONTHS.

13. THE SAUDIS AND EGYPTIANS WANT APPLICATION OF THE ACCORD, PAKRADOUNI SAID, BUT THEY WOULD RATHER LEAVE THE POLITICAL ONUS (VIS-A-VIS THE PALESTINIANS) ENTIRELY WITH SYRIA. KUWAIT, DESPITE THE CURRENT ATTENTION BEING GIVEN TO THE ACTIVITIES OF THE KUWAITI AMBASSADOR IN LEBANON, WOULD NEVER RISK AN ATTITUDE OF ITS OWN COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT OF SAUDI ARABIA. THE WORST THING TO LET HAPPEN NOW, PAKRADOUNI BELIEVES, WOULD BE A REOPENING OF THE NEGOTIATIONS
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ABOUT THE MEANING OF THE CAIRO ACCORD. SARKIS HAD MADE THE POINT THAT IT IS LEBANON'S SOVEREIGN PREROGATIVE TO REGULATE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON AND SARKIS HAD PRODUCED A DOCUMENT OF INTERPRETATION WHICH WAS STRICT BUT FAIR; HE SHOULD THEREFORE STAND BY IT. KUWAIT AND SAUDI ARABIA COULD PLAY USEFUL MARGINAL CONCILIATORY ROLES BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND PALESTINIANS, BUT THEY SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO GET INTO THE BUSINESS OF RENEGOTIATION OF

TERMS.

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14. THE ARMY. PAKRADOUNI SAID THAT VICTOR KHOURY WAS CHOSEN HEAD OF THE ARMY BECAUSE HE WAS THE LEAST OBJECTIONABLE OF THE THREE CANDIDATES UNDER CONSIDERATION FROM THE BEGINNING. THE FUTURE OF THE ARMY WAS THE KEY TO THE FUTURE OF LEBANON. IT WOULD HAVE TO BECOME AT LEAST AS STRONG AS THE SYRIAN ARMY PRESENTLY IN LEBANON (30,000) AND WOULD HAVE TO BE IN A POSITION TO PUT DOWN "LITTLE REVOLTS" IN THE COUNTRY WHEREVER THEY MIGHT OCCUR. (PAKRADOUNI SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF THE ARMY IN DETAIL AT ANOTHER MEETING WITH EMBOFF.)

15. SARKIS-ASAD-AND PAKRADIOUNI. PAKRADIOUNI COMMENTED THAT THERE WAS A VERY REAL AND DEEP MUTUAL CONFIDENCE BETWEEN PRESIDENTS SARKIS AND ASAD, BUT THERE WAS ALSO A PHYSICAL COMMUNICATION PROBLEM -- THE TELEPHONE SYSTEM NOT BEING SECURE, AND SARKIS NOT WANTING TO BE SEEN TRAIPSING OFF TO DAMASCUS TOO
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OFTEN. (PAKRADOUNI REFLECTED THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION THAT HE WAS ON INTIMATE TERMS WITH BOTH PRESIDENTS, AND FULLY SUPPORTS BOTH.)

16. COMMENT: PAKRADOUNI CONTINUES TO BE ONE OF THE MOST LUCID AND REASONABLE OBSERVERS OF THE LEBANESE POLITICAL SCENE, AND CONTINUES TO ACTIVELY PURSUE POLITICAL MANEUVERS WELL SUITED TO THE NEEDS OF THE HOUR, BUT ALWAYS WITH A VIEW TO RECREATION OF A CHRISTIAN-MOSLEM LEBANON AT PEACE WITH ITSELF. END COMMENT.
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Message Attributes

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